TOWARDS A LIVING CULTURE

THE SECULAR PATH

Neelamani Sahu

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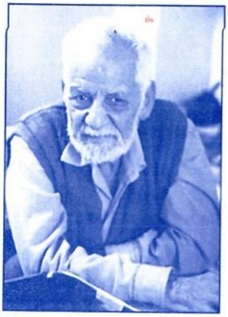
Bhubaneswar



Satpal Dang

(1920 —June 15, 2013)

(In a letter dated 27-1-1999)

1 received your book "Towards a Living Culture"... I have read it. I find it to be quite interesting, useful and educative. I think books of this type – both from the viewpoints of contents/subject matter and size are very much needed.'

With Regards
Best wishes for 1999
Yours sincerely,
Satyapal Dang

In memory of

Photo Credit: The Hindu

Prof. K J Shah

The History Behind

Krishna Chandra Bhattachaya (May 12, 1875 - December 11, 1949) was one of the renowned philosophers of India in the early part of the twentieth century. The wind of the freedom movement had also touched him. With the objective of making the people free in thinking, he wrote a paper entitled "Svaraj in Ideas". During 1928-30 while he was the Principal of Hoogly College, he had read the article in a meeting. The paper remained hidden among his papers till 1954. Only in that year it was published for the first time in *Visva-Bharati Journal* (Vol. 20, 1954, pp. 103-114). Still it remained unnoticed till 1984. In that year the Editorial Board of *Indian Philosophical Quarterly,* published by the Department of Philosophy, University of Poona, decided to bring out a special issue of *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* publishing Krishna Chandra Bhattachaya's "Svaraj in Ideas" and along with it the comments of philosophers of India, and for that purpose the Editorial Board of *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* formed a Special Editorial Board consisting of Prof. K. J. Shah, Prof. Ramachandra Gandhi, and Prof. Probal Dasgupta as Guest Editors and Prof. S. S. Deshpande as Secretary. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. XI, No. 4, October-December 1984 was this special issue.

Prof. K. J. Shah was very emphatic about K. C. Bhattacharya's article and used to say — This is such an important article that it will vertically divide the intellectuals of India.

After reading K. C. Bhattacharya's article and some of the comments published in the special issue, I wrote an article, "Towards a Living Culture — A Note on Krishna Chandra Bhattachaya's 'Svaraj in

Ideas'" and sent it to *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* for publication and it was published in its Vol. 14, No. 2, April-June, 1987.

Later when we met, Prof. K. J. Shah said, "Prof. Sahu, You have killed KCB." With folded hands I said, "No, Sir, I have not done that. He is a great philosopher. I have expressed my opinion only on that paper." Prof. Shah had not said that by way of a joke. He was serious and sincere. Thereafter, I never heard Prof. Shah talk about "Svaraj in Ideas".

From Kolkata, Manasi Dasgupta, then an I. C. P. R. Fellow, wrote a comment on my paper, which was published in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, October-December, 1987. Apart from other comments, she quoted a sentence of Nietzsche's from R. K. Mukherjee's *The Dynamics of Morals* (p. 121) and it was, "The removal of God from the world deprives the idea of all meaning." I could not get R. K. Mukherjee's book. So I could not know the source of this quotation in Nietzsche's books and the context in which he said so. I tried to search for this sentence in some of the books of Nietzsche which I could get. I did not get the quoted sentence, but I could get other wonderful ideas. With the help of these I tried to meet Manasi Dasgupta's comments.

While there was much criticism of Nietzsche because of his so-called association with Nazism, Walter Kaufmann was publishing his new translations of Nietzsche's works and blaming Nietzsche's sister for the so-called association and trying to free Nietzsche from such criticism. Under such circumstances, instead of stating Nietzsche's position in my own words, I preferred to quote Nietzsche in order to avoid misunderstanding. I sent the article to *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* for publication. I had also sent a copy to Manasi Dasgupta. The Editor of *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* asked me to make the article shorter by paraphrasing the quotations. Because of the reasons mentioned above, I did not like to do so. Naturally, it was not published. Manasi Dasgupta too did not reply.

I am indebted to all the people involved in this *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* initiated discussion of KCB's paper and I am grateful to all of them for the great ideas I have learnt from them.

But the discussion carried on on the pages of *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* was for the philosophical community. Seeing the relevance of the topic for the common man, it was developed further and "Towards A Living Culture — The Secular Path" is the result.

It was first published by All Odisha Federation of Teachers' Organizations, Bhubaneswar. I am grateful to its Secretary General, Abani Boral who is no more with us.

I thank Sri Priyabrata Sahu of Impression Press, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar for printing it at a very short notice.

Neelamani Sahu

28-9-2015

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TOWARDS
A
LIVING CULTURE

THE SECULAR PATH

Today India is at a very critical juncture. In her march through the twenty-first century, she faces a two-pronged fork — one leading to a bright future, to the establishment of a heaven in our country and the other to utter darkness, to abyss. We, Indians have to make a free choice — whether we shall establish a heaven here or we shall have a hell.

CULTURAL DOMINATION

There are different kinds of domination — political, economic, social, religious, cultural, etc. But their nature and impact are different. Let us think of political and cultural domination. One country may invade, conquer, and politically dominate another country. However, this conquest by force — this political domination might be of a short duration unless an attempt is made to perpetuate it. There are many ways in which political conquest is perpetuated. Cultural invasion is one of them which consequently results in cultural domination over the conquered people.

The conquerors, by cultural invasion, try to destroy the culture of the conquered people and by doing it they make an attempt to destroy

the very identity of the people conquered. The culture of the conquerors is posed in such a manner that the conquered people would feel that it is a superior culture and the people a superior people. More often than not pecuniary benefits are at the back of the propagation of such views and the invaded people fall a prey to such propaganda and in the end they find themselves castrated — impotent to such an extent that they look at themselves through the eyes of the invaders. At such a point the internalization of the so-called superior culture and, consequently, the feeling of inferiority complex are complete in the colonized people. Thus, cultural domination is more insidious than mere political domination.

More or less the same thing happened to the Indian people under the Mughals and the Britishers. But the essential difference between the Mughals and the Britishers was that the Mughals invaded and conquered India, settled down here and thought India their home whereas the Britishers came to India as traders and prayed at the Mughal courts to get gracious grant of some land to establish trading posts. The saying goes: Give him an inch and he will take the ell. They had their colonialist aims. They played nasty diplomatic and military games with the Indian kings and the people and gained control over the length and breadth of India. They never thought of India as their home. Thus, they were downright colonialists. They thought India a milch cow and they milked her to the best of their ability. They looted India and carried away as much of her wealth as they could to their own country. The Mughals too plundered India, but they did not plunder her to carry the wealth away to their own country. They plundered the people in order to enrich themselves and the treasury — to strengthen their rule. However, that was the way of the world during those days. Other kings too did the same thing with the same objective.

Along with the British came into India the Western culture. The British colonialists introduced, propagated, and patronized the

spreading of Western culture with the objective of destroying Indian culture and thus tried to make the people impotent culturally and otherwise. There were many factors like education, employment, patronage, etc. which helped in the acceptance and spread of the Western culture in India to the extent of destroying the Indian culture.

THE FIRST ATTEMPTS TO THROW OFF DOMINATION — CULTURAL AND POLITICAL

The people upholding the indigenous, Indian culture sensed this danger. (I do not wish to say here whether the influence of Western culture did some good to India or not, or whether the indigenous culture was upheld dogmatically or otherwise.) So, before the process of destroying the indigenous culture came to a successful end, some of the thoughtful people of India became alive to the process itself, and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the beginnings of the first attempts to throw off this cultural invasion. They made attempt to emancipate the minds of Indian people from the domination of Western culture and to inculcate in them a love for Indian culture and tradition. Here I need not remind you that by Indian culture and tradition these pioneers meant all that India had prior to the coming of the British including the Muslim culture and tradition. Now-a-days attempts are being made by a section of fanatic Hindus to declare the Muslims as foreigners or second-class citizens, but during those days, no such thinking had developed. When we look into our past we find many Muslim rulers and Muslim people who fought against the British to keep India free from the British domination. Tipu Sultan and Siraj-ud-Daulah were the most illustrious ones among them. They showed what patriotism could be. The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the beginnings — the first attempts — to throw off the British political domination too. So it is patriotism that made the whole of the people of

India stand united to free India politically and culturally from the British domination. During our freedom struggle we engaged ourselves in a life and death struggle to establish our identity. Looking into the past, we found that we had a continuous civilization since ancient times, whereas the European civilization was of a comparatively recent origin. During a very early period in the past when we were highly civilized, the Europeans were still at a somewhat barbarian stage of civilization. This was a plus point with us notwithstanding the recent rapid growth and the superior quality of European civilization under the influence of science and technology. In our struggle to establish our identity vis-à-vis the British or European identity, we asserted many things uncritically, for it was not a time for self-criticism but a time for self-assertion. Nothing of the past seemed then irrational. That was one kind of patriotism shown during those days. But that is not the only kind of patriotism.

At different times, Pakistan and China attacked our country. The whole of our people stood as one to meet the foreign aggressions. This is another kind of patriotism shown by our people.

THE NEED FOR A STILL DIFFERENT KIND OF PATRIOTISM

We became victorious in our freedom struggle and India became free. So the kind of patriotism that was needed to fight against an alien rule, and an alien culture as a tool for perpetuating alien rule, is no longer needed now. What is needed now is the patriotism to fight against cultural injustice — indigenous or foreign, to free oneself from the bondage of an unjust culture. This needs even more courage than what was needed to fight the foreign rule or foreign aggressions. — For in our fight against foreign rule or foreign aggressions our own people were at our side — we were one whole. But in our endeavour to free ourselves from the bondage of an unjust culture — in our fight against

cultural injustice, we may have to fight against some of our own people in the form of counterposing a just culture against an unjust one. However, the qualitative nature of the fight might be completely different here, for here the struggle would be at the level of understanding, to understand the nature of a just culture. — What we would like to call a *living culture*. But in order to come to grips with our problem and to understand what we mean by a *living culture*, we have to understand the relation between culture and what we call knowledge.

CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE

Slogans rend the air: “We must preserve our culture”, “We must keep our culture intact”, “Our culture must remain pure”, “We must honour our past”, etc. When we hear such slogans even from some academics we feel that sufficient attention is not given to the thought behind such slogans. Let us take up a hypothetical case.

Mr. X hails from a culture in which religion occupies a central place. In almost all religions, the theory of creation of the world and of man is there in one form or another. It is there in his religion too. Nevertheless, as far as his education is concerned he comes across the theory of evolution of the solar system and the theory of the evolution of life and of man. As a result, he faces two opposing theories — the theory of creation and the theory of evolution. Which one is he to accept? If, on the one hand, he is told to hold fast to his culture, then he has every right to charge his parents that they spend a lot of their money and kill a lot of his own time by sending him to an educational institution that imparts some falsehoods in the name of knowledge. If he is told, on the other hand, that he should uphold whatever he learns in the educational institutions, then his culture receives a shocking blow, and in order to

withstand it, there must be consequent changes in the culture itself. However, this means that the culture cannot remain intact, pure, etc.

SCIENCE VERSUS RELIGION CONTROVERSY AND CULTURE

This controversy is a controversy between religion and science. In religion, God occupies the central place and any change that takes place is explained as an act emanating from the will of God. No such supernatural entity is entertained in scientific explanations.

A culture cannot keep itself free from the controversy between science and religion. It cannot keep its eyes closed. As a culture is claimed to be a system of ideas and also as a store-house of truths, it cannot have within itself two contending theories — such as the theory of creation and the theory of evolution — as truths. The tension that exists here between science and religion will cause tension in the cultural system.

CULTURES: (I) DEAD, (II) LIVING, AND (III) STUPEFIED

Now the question is: Are we always alive to such cultural tensions? This question leads us to divide cultures into three kinds: (i) **Dead Culture**, (ii) **Living Culture**, (iii) **Stupefied Culture**.

(i) A **DEAD CULTURE** is a culture that was in practice sometime in the past. From the point of view of *cultural praxis*, now there are no people who claim to inherit this culture. Here the paradigms would be the culture of Ancient Egypt and that of Mesopotamia.

(ii) A **LIVING CULTURE** is a culture that takes into account the latest developments in knowledge and makes internal changes and necessary adjustments such that the cultural praxis of a people is in conformity with what they claim to know. There is nothing dogmatic in what is claimed to be a living culture. Again, a living culture is a cultural praxis

in which reflection and practice go hand in hand, such that reflection provides the truth-based rationality for cultural practice and the latter on its part keeps reflection within the bounds of what we know and the values based on such knowledge. Thus, one helping the other, reflection and practice generate a cultural praxis that keeps the deadwood out. There is no place for dogmatism, superstition, etc. in a living culture. Here we go on *reevaluating all the values of the past in the light of the growing knowledge in order to find their relevance to the present*.

(iii) A **STUPEFIED CULTURE** is a culture that does not as a matter of necessity and rational activity take into account the developments in knowledge. The culture is claimed to be inherited from the past and unchallenged reverence is demanded for it. It is said that the preservation of the sanctity of a culture is the duty of the people upholding the culture. We must hold fast to our culture. Any looseness in it is a danger to the culture itself. The men of the past who contributed to the culture we inherit now are unchallengeable. Thus, all that we inherit in the form of a culture contains a large number of unchallengeable statements of the pastmasters. As they are not rationally examined, they are dogmatically accepted. Moreover, here the doors of the culture are closed to science and scientific developments. And this makes the culture the more dogmatic. It appears to say: Let the science go in its own way, but let our culture be pure. As if it says: Render unto Caesar that is Caesar’s and unto God that is God’s. This insensitiveness to the developments in science makes culture a stupefied culture.

From this it appears that most of us live in stupefied cultures. We involve ourselves in many family activities; we participate in many social and religious practices that have no longer any vital meaning for us. We neither welcome nor resist the ideas received through our education. Thus, we are alive neither to culture nor to science. In our lives, both the streams run without interacting with each other. We never examine our

belief system to see whether it is consistent or not. We never enquire whether there is any contradiction in what we claim to know. We live without examining how much of what we claim to know is really knowledge. Such an uncritical living is nothing but a stupefied living.

DOUBT AND ITS CLARIFICATION IN SCIENCE AND CULTURE

Here one may raise a question: Why should a culture conform to the scientific developments when the propositions of science are themselves doubtful? It is a legitimate question and we can consent to the fact that the propositions of culture and those of science are doubted. However, what we would like to distinguish is how these doubts are met with and resolved. Whenever a scientific proposition is doubted, the scientist upholding it offers justifications for holding the proposition to be true and always such justifications are public in the sense that any scientist in any part of the world can verify the proposition. On the contrary, whenever a proposition of a culture is doubted the person upholding the proposition usually refers to the authority of a pastmaster. Alternatively, he says that it is a matter of belief, or that the justification for such propositions is confined to the personal experience of the pastmasters who enunciated the propositions. He even exhorts us to believe that doubting the propositions of our culture is to doubt the very veracity of our own ancestors and to defile the past in which they lived. Thus, we are urged upon to believe in the veracity of a culture and not to honour anything whatsoever that challenges the culture or puts it into doubt.

THE NATURE OF CERTAINTY IN SCIENCE

It is true that the propositions of science are not certain for there is no circle of certainty in which science moves. All the certainty science has is the certainty within the circle of probability, i.e., the certainty

depends on the fulfillment of certain conditions. Logically, empirical propositions of the general type cannot be certain, for it demands the putting together of past, present and future into a single present which is impossible. Even if that is possible it is empirically impossible to verify a proposition like “All men are mortal”. Suppose we can bring the past into the present by granting that there is not a single man who has over-lived a normal span of life of a few generations, i.e., men who could be over, say, two hundred years are not there. They could live only the normal span of life and not beyond that. We can bring the future into the present by deciding that in order to enable me to verify the proposition “All men are mortal” we, the human beings, one and all, will die. Accordingly, human beings begin one after another (including my near and dear ones) to die, but so long as I am alive the proposition is not verified and the moment I am dead there is no one else to see whether it is verified or not. Thus, it may be empirically impossible to verify a proposition. Moreover, a hypothetical decision like the one to die cannot be taken in case of other general propositions.

The position that the certainty of science moves within the circle of probability makes science rational and keeps it out of the fold of dogmatism. Moreover, it makes science open-ended. It does not keep its doors and windows closed. Science is a human activity and so long as humanity continues to live there will be development of science, growth of knowledge. The end of humanity is the end of human knowledge, but not the finality of human knowledge. The finality of knowledge is quite impossible. Thus, in the course of development scientific knowledge, new facts may come to light and these new facts may necessitate the modification or rejection of some of the propositions so far held to be true. Therefore, in science, nothing is sacrosanct and so a past howsoever glorious is not sacrosanct. Here lies the rationality of science. On the other hand, as far as culture is concerned the situation is not so. We have to revere the past, keep the culture chaste and sanctified.

Thus, the dogmatic elements thrive in a culture. The call for a living culture is a call to throw off these dogmatic elements and in order to do so, science must play a pivotal role in building up a living culture.

ASSIMILATION OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE IN CULTURE: TWO CONTENDING FRAMEWORKS

However, here the pertinent question is: How can a culture assimilate scientific knowledge into its fold, and change and modify itself if so necessitated? We know that this is a question concerning the problem of assimilation. Whenever I am faced with such a question two contending frameworks come to my mind. Both the frameworks are there in our tradition from antiquity. One is the framework of *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"*. (Let the noble thoughts come to us from every side. — *Rk Veda*) And the other is the framework of *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah"* (Better death in one's dharma; the dharma of another is full of fear. — *Gita*, 3:35). There are people among us who uphold either *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"* or *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah"*. Though these two frameworks belong to our tradition, they appear to be universal in spirit, for to whatever country or cultural tradition a person may belong, he would be upholding one or the other of these two frameworks as far as his attitude towards culture and cultural matters is concerned. Of course, there might be people who might be upholding one or the other of the two frameworks without being conscious of doing so.

I uphold the former, for I believe that only this framework would enable us to have a living culture. However, as it is a question of assimilation, the people who uphold the other framework may say that assimilation as such is not an evil. It may even be positively necessary for healthy progress. Assimilation is all right so long as it does not

threaten, or take away, our freedom. They may say that we can assimilate a part or the whole of an alien culture only after there is a full and open-eyed struggle between it and our indigenous culture. This is a fair enough position to be upheld by any one who has an open mind. Even I am not unwilling to uphold such a position. But that is not enough and they do not stop at that. They gradually introduce one condition after another such that slowly the eyelids close, the ears are plugged and so on and so forth — i.e., the doors and windows of the mind are shut one after the other. How do they do so? Gradually they introduce limiting concepts like ”our old world Indian mind”, ”within limits of different cultures and cultural ideals”, etc. The introduction or presence of such limiting concepts in a culture may stand in the way of assimilation, adjustment, and synthesis.

LIFE — SECULAR AND SPIRITUAL

Sometimes they, the upholders of *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah”*, make a distinction between secular life and spiritual life. They say that the secular life has to adjust itself to the times. — We have to alter ourselves here to suit the situation. However, as far as the spiritual life is concerned, the times have to adjust itself to the spiritual life. — We cannot compromise our ideals here in order to have smooth sailing with times. Nevertheless, here the question is: Can we rationally live through these two lives and be at peace? Life cannot be divided into two separate and watertight compartments — secular and spiritual. Even if such a distinction can be made, definitely there will be interaction between secular and spiritual life and between secular and spiritual ideas. Moreover, in the process of this interaction a clash of ideas cannot be overruled. As the upholders of "Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah” do not favour any compromise and by implication, they hold that the spiritual life is of

primary importance, how can the secular life be unaffected? The natural answer would be: The secular life must adapt itself to the spiritual life.

"ANO BHADRAH KRATAVO YANTU VISVATAH" VERSUS "SVADHARME NIDHANAM SREYAH PARADHARMO BHAYAVAHAH"

When we say: “Let the noble thoughts come to us from every side”, we keep the doors and windows of our mind open to welcome noble thoughts, ideas, ideals and the criterion of welcome, acceptance and assimilation is the nobility of the ideas themselves, not anything else. But an upholder of *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah”* would say that only the spirit is universal and real; we must be loyal to our own ideals; we would keep an open-mind for other ideals; but we assimilate them if they are found within our own ideals and reject them if they do not conform to our system of ideals. So for them, the only way to appraise a new ideal is to view it through our actual ideal in order to find whether it conforms to our set of actual ideals or not. So the outcome is that the criterion of assimilation is not the nobility of the ideas but conforming to our set of ideas — conforming to our indigenous framework. Whenever we come across a new idea, there is no fair comparison and competition between the set of ideas we possess and the new idea to ascertain whether the new idea is a nobler one or not. Only one way of assimilation is permitted and that way is the way of conformity to our ideas. If there is conformity between the new idea and our set of ideas, let us assimilate it, but if there is non-conformity, let us reject it. Therefore, the emphasis here is on the primacy of the framework, not on the nobility of ideas. If such a criterion is accepted even a piece of truth might be rejected, because it does not conform to the set of ideas we possess. It had dangerous

implications in the past. One has only to remember how Darwin's Theory of Evolution or Copernicus's Heliocentric Theory suffered in the hands of church fathers. How many people were burnt at the stake simply because the truth they said went against the tenets of the church! It may have, under the present circumstances, more dangerous implications. *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah"* is a frozen or fossilized framework, whereas *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"* is a vibrant, fluid framework.

CULTURAL VALUES AND THE WORLD

A pertinent question may be raised here: How can a culture assimilate scientific knowledge into its fold, and change and modify itself if necessitated? In order to answer it, we have to understand how the concepts 'culture', 'science', 'truth' and 'value' are interrelated. Though culture is said to be a storehouse of values, values might or might not be related to and based on truths. The question: "Is value truth-based?" is an important question. For if we say it is truth-based, then we thrive in a living culture; but if we say it is not, then we live and sink in a stupefied culture. Suppose we have a cultural system in which values are based on truths and another in which they are not. Again, suppose in the latter system we have the theory of creation. God created the world. He created man in His own image. As man is the crown of His creation, God created the world for the benefit of man. With these notions in our minds, how do we look at the world? How do we behave with it? Our attitude towards the world is that it is there for the benefit of man. The more we exploit it, the better the benefits for man. In case of any imbalance, God would look after that, for He looks after His own creation. In the worst case, we shall say that we are only fulfilling the will of God. This is how we behave with the world at present.

How would we look and behave with the world in a cultural system in which values are related to and based on truths? If we have the theory of evolution as one of the elements of our cultural system then the attitude that we shall have towards the world will be completely different. We will not look at the world as an object of exploitation for the benefit of man. We shall look at it as a place for the continuance of the human race. Keeping the future of human race in mind we shall use nature in a planned manner — not exploit it. Any kind of ecological imbalance will be considered a threat to the continuance of mankind. In this cultural system, in case of any imbalance threatening humanity, we shall not be saying that we are fulfilling the will of any God, but we shall hold ourselves responsible for the doom of mankind. Moreover, our behaviour towards nature would be considered by us to be irresponsible and suicidal.

VALUES — HUMAN CREATIONS TO MEET HUMAN NEEDS

So we have to consider how values can be truth-based. Sometimes we misconceive that values are objective. — As objective as the facts that are there in the world. Still one feels some kind of difference between the two; so one claims that the way to know facts is not the way to know values. As if someone makes a distinction between facts and mathematics and says that the way to know facts is not the way to know mathematics. Here facts and mathematics are both objects of knowledge, whereas values are not objects of knowledge. Values are not as objective as facts are. Values are not objective in the sense that facts are. Human beings give values and thus they are human creations. For example, an act is neither just nor unjust by itself, but it is judged to be either just or unjust. — It is given a value. An action, which is considered just in one society, may be considered unjust in another society. In our courts, a dacoit would be punished for killing a policeman,

but the leader of dacoits would punish a dacoit for not killing one. Both the judge and the leader are just. — For their actions are life-preserving: The judge punishes to preserve life in our society; the leader of dacoits punishes to preserve life in the society of dacoits.

If someone considers the above example to be unworthy of consideration, then I would request him to consider the actions of the opposite groups involved in a revolution and how they evaluate the revolutionary situation. — Say that of the French Revolution, the Great October Socialist Revolution, or even of the American War of Independence. Whether you are in favour of revolution or you are opposed to it is a different question. It does not matter on which side you are but as you give a value to what is happening right in front of your own eyes, your opponent who is also an eye-witness to the same event values it differently. This is something that must be accepted. Only in relation to this justice is rational. We cannot say injustice is rational or justice is irrational, because either alternative is life-destroying.

Justice as a value is related to the facts of life. Values are created by human interests to meet human needs, but sometimes the creation of such values is grounded in some kind of metaphysics. — Sometimes God is said to be the source of all values.

RELATION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND GOD

The latter position urges upon us to discuss the relationship between the growth of knowledge and dependence on God. In general, we can say that growth of knowledge and dependence on God are inversely related. — The more we know the less dependent we are on God. Our ancestors knew less and depended on God more; but as we know more and more, we depend on God less and less. In case of breaking out of cholera or smallpox, our ancestors went to the temples to appease the local goddesses, but we go to the doctors.

Our ancestors knew very little about the stars and planets. They found the stars to be relatively fixed, but observed the planets to have relatively free movement. This led them to believe that the planets had free will. As a result, they were personified and thought to be endowed with powers — powers to influence human fate. Consequently, Astrology developed and within the womb of Astrology the science of Astronomy grew too. With the birth of Astronomy as a science, Astrology and Astronomy took different paths. Now no astronomer believes in such personification and power. The relationship between the growth of knowledge and dependence on God seems to be such that one can say: *The more we know the less we depend on God.* The growth of knowledge influences and changes our attitude towards God. Here one is reminded of the reply Laplace (1749-1827) gave to Napoleon (1769-1821). Napoleon remarked, ”M. Laplace, they tell me you have written a large book (*Mechanique Celeste*, 1799) on the system of universe and you have never even mentioned its creator”. The astronomer answered bluntly, ”Sire, I had no need for any such hypothesis”.

GOD IS NOTHING BUT THE RATIONALIZATION OF HUMAN IGNORANCE

All natural phenomena, which were awe-inspiring and incomprehensible, were also personified and people thought them to be endowed with powers to produce the natural phenomena. They appeased these personified gods in times of crisis. This leads me to say that *God is nothing but the rationalization of ignorance of man.*

Here it may be felt that not much justification has been offered in support of the statement that God is nothing but the rationalization of ignorance of man. If science is a body of truths, as people have taken it in general in the ordinary run of life, then the theory of evolution of man,

being a part of biological sciences, is true. Moreover, if the theory of evolution of man is true, then we can imagine that at a particular point of time man acquired what we call “rationality” and prior to that man was not rational — he was merely an animal.

The *animal pre-man* might have felt at home (as other animals might have felt then) in the world he lived in and all his fears and apprehensions of something — some natural phenomenon — might have been quite instinctive — as threats to the very preservation of life. At the disappearance of the danger, the fear might have also disappeared. But with the generation of rationality in man the “homely world” might have, all of a sudden, become a very strange world. From a state of timelessness, he became subject to time. The *animal pre-man* was living in an ever present, now he became a man of the past, present and future. And then the need to understand the world in the stream of time might have arisen. — The need for explanations. The generation of rationality in man obliges him to understand every phenomenon — every event that takes place around him in the world. But at any particular point of time the amount of knowledge available to him might not enable him to explain some event or other. Yet he cannot leave the event unexplained — some explanation or other is needed.

We come across the examples of such explanations in primitive religions, which were concerned to explain the natural phenomena that the savage mind could not understand. P. H. Nowell-Smith says, “His normal routines, based on experience, are liable to interruption by abnormal occurrences (floods, droughts, tempests, earthquakes, and the like) which he cannot control. It is these catastrophes to which he attributes a supernatural origin and which he attempts to ward off by the performance of religious duties.” (“Religion and Morality”, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Vol. VII, p. 152)

The early man was awe-struck by the natural forces. Accordingly he personified them — worshipped and “appeased” them. Today’s

monotheistic religions developed out of the early nature-worshipping religions which themselves were born of the ignorance of man. *Ignorance was universal, so was religion that was born of ignorance,* though particular religions differed from each other depending upon the differing historical experience of different groups of people who developed such religions. Only in recent times, with the development of scientific knowledge, man is beginning to take himself out of the shadow of religion.

It was not only in the very early history of man that ignorance led to the creation of religion. Plenty of examples can be found in human history showing human ignorance leading to the dependence on God. Not to speak of the man of the street, philosophers — and that too even empirical philosophers — took refuge in God in order to explain something that was not otherwise explainable. Locke was an empiricist. Empiricism holds that experience is the only source of knowledge. Locke had to explain how the objects of the world produce perceptions in the mind. But he could not do so on purely empirical grounds with the help of the knowledge available to him. So he had to introduce God to explain how the objects of the world produce perceptions in the mind. Locke says, "The first are simple ideas, which since the mind … can by no means make to itself, must necessarily be the product of things operating on the mind, in a natural way, and producing therein those perceptions which by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker they are ordained and adopted to …" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book IV, Ch. IV, # 4). Thus, with God's help Locke is able to explain how perceptions take place in the human mind. Moreover, there is a convention among the people. The convention is to say "God knows" as an alternative way of saying "I don't know". See how man's ignorance is covered up by God's knowledge!

Only with the advent of science and the infusion of scientific spirit into his heart, man is gradually shedding off his ignorance and making

himself free from the so-called dependence on God. The more we know the less are we dependent on God. So we have said: *God is nothing but the rationalization of ignorance of man.*

CAN SCIENCE EXPLAIN EVERYTHING?

Here one might ask: Can science explain all that happens in the world? We may readily concede that at any point of time science might not be able to explain all that happens in the world. For we have already said that there is no finality of human knowledge. Knowledge is a growing process till the end of humanity. The end of humanity is the end of human knowledge. Finality of knowledge is an impossibility. This implies that so long as humanity continues, at any point of time there might be something that at the given moment science would not be able to explain. — There might be something that could be said to be unknown. But this does not mean that the scientist would take refuge in the so-called supernatural power in order to explain such phenomena. Being true to the scientific spirit he would say that the sum-total of knowledge that is at our disposal cannot throw light on the phenomena and they are not explainable by science at the present moment, but at a future date when new data come to light science might be able to explain them.

GOD MIGHT BE A PERSONAL NEED IN SOME CASES

The unexplained phenomena might not cause any problem for the scientist. The scientist might not feel any tension because of that. However, for the common man they might cause some problems, for the unexplained, the unknown is awful. Let us take an example. Death is unknown. What is death? What happens after death? What is death and what happens after death can never be known. Though death occurs in the human race, it never occurs in an individual's life, for death

is the negation of life — the very negation of the knowing process. Death as an unknown phenomenon might cause some emotional imbalance in the man who thinks about it. He might feel insecure. But he is born into a conceptual network in which God is there in all His perfection. He is there as the source of all moral values, as the judge over all human actions, as one who rewards or punishes human beings, as a person who sends a human soul either to heaven or to hell. Now suppose God (whatever He might be or not be) gives him the courage to *meet* death and keeps him emotionally balanced. As a result, he feels secure in this "strange" world. Here for him God is a personal need. He would sincerely believe in God. In such a case the thought would be in accordance with the personal need and the behaviour in accordance with the thought. That means there would be no difference between *saying* and *showing*. — There would be perfect harmony between the thought and the action of the man. And this harmony between a man's thought and his way of life would definitely contribute to the well-being of society.

SOCIALIZATION OF GOD KILLS GOD

Even if in this sense God might be thought to be a personal need, the socialization of God kills God. — In the institution of religion, God is lost. In a similar vein we can say: In the institution of Christianity, Christ is lost; in the institution of Buddhism, the Buddha is lost, and so on. One might not have that personal need, but just because he is born into a particular society — into a particular conceptual network — he participates in the religious practices as a matter of social life. An ever-widening gulf is created between *saying* and *showing*. There are people for whom religious behaviour is a part of social behaviour and there is no personal need. We also come across people whose discourse is religious, but their intercourse is irreligious. There are very few people in whose life God is a personal need and in whom *word* and *deed*

coincide. In most cases the religious function is just a matter of course function — just a social function. We must not be surprised to see people who appear to be religious, but are engaged in the most exploitative and heinous activities.

GOD IN DIFFERENT CONCEPTUAL NETWORKS

In connection with God I have put above within parenthesis: "Whatever He might be or not be". The reason for doing so is that in one conceptual network something might be considered real while in another conceptual network the very same thing might be considered unreal. In one conceptual network God, angels, Heaven, Hell, spirits, fairies, ghosts, etc. might be considered real, whereas in another all those might be considered fictions of the mind.

In the Hindu conceptual network, the idea of the caste-system is there as an essential element. The Hindus are not willing to give it up, because they think that God created it and as such it is inviolable. Whereas there are other conceptual networks in which there is nothing akin to the caste-system, so to the people who uphold such conceptual networks a society consisting of castes appears weird and strange. The Hindu conceptual network has produced and sustains a caste-ridden society, whereas other conceptual networks are there which have produced and sustain caste-free societies. Similarly, in some of the religions that have taken birth in India (e.g., Hinduism) the idea of rebirth is there along with its associated ideas, but other religions are there in which the ideas of rebirth is not there. So among the Hindus anything connected with the caste-system or anything connected with rebirth is considered real, whereas for the followers of Christianity they are unreal — they appear to be meaningless.

Hence what is real or what is unreal for us is determined by what conceptual network we entertain. A person may change his allegiance

from one conceptual network to another. Consequently, in his case what is real for him may become unreal and what is unreal may become real. Then the question is: are all conceptual networks equally valid? I would say that only that conceptual network is really valid if and only if it is a consistent body of knowledge that is public in nature. In case of many of the conceptual networks there is no consistency and many of the items claimed to be knowledge are not really public in nature. Uncritically people still entertain such conceptual networks. God and His perfections are considered to be real in an idealistic conceptual network, whereas in a materialistic conceptual network they all become unreal. They are considered to be inventions of the human mind to meet human purposes during a particular period of history.

STATUS OF TRUTH IN SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTUAL NETWORK AND IN OTHER CONCEPTUAL NETWORKS

Truths change in scientific conceptual networks. What is considered to be true today might be replaced tomorrow if the discovery of new data demands of us to do so. Newton occupies a very important place in the history of science, but his theories are not studied today in the same form as they were studied a century ago. Einstein's Theory of Relativity has brought about many changes in the Newtonian physics. Let us take the case of Bertrand Russell — a multi-faceted personality. He was philosopher, a logician and a mathematician in the same breath, not to speak of the other dimensions of his intellectual life. He has his place in the histories of philosophy, logic and mathematics. Notwithstanding that *The Principles of Mathematics* or even the monumental work *Principia Mathematica* (which he wrote with the collaboration of A. N. Whitehead) are not studied as textbooks in colleges and universities. However, they have become milestones. — Milestones in the history of development of logic and mathematics.

What is studied today in colleges and universities consist of the latest developments in logic and mathematics. But his books on philosophy are still found to be prescribed as textbooks. Why the difference? Why did he become outdated in logic and mathematics, but continues to be relevant in philosophy? The reason is that in the areas of logic and mathematics, like in the areas of exact sciences, a hypothesis can be definitely proved or disproved, or what is considered to be true today may be definitely rejected tomorrow in favour of another piece of truth if new data force us to do so. In this manner, definite developments could be brought about in science, logic and mathematics. But that is not so in case of philosophy. In philosophy nothing can be definitely proved or disproved. All the issues raised since the birth of philosophy do still continue to be living issues. Philosophical activity is a rational activity and philosophical issues are rational issues. Some issues grip the minds of some people and other issues those of other people and, thus, all issues continue to be living issues.

Philosophy has affinity with religion. In religion too nothing can be definitely proved or disproved. However, there is a great difference between philosophy and religion. — The *rationality* of philosophy slides down to the *faith* of religion. An upholder of religion says, “I believe it, therefore it is true”. There are different groups of people who believe differently. Accordingly we have different religions. — We have different conceptual networks. All networks thrive side by side.

In science one finds only one conceptual network. — A network common to all the people working in the field of science around the globe. We do not have one conceptual network for the Indian scientists and another for the American scientists and still another for the Russian scientists, and so on. Nor do we have one scientific conceptual network for the Hindus, another for the Christians, and so on. Only one conceptual network does the job, because here knowledge is public — truth is public. But in religion religious knowledge is not public —

religious truth is not public in the sense that what is claimed to be true in one religious conceptual network might be claimed as false in another. Each one has a set of truths of its own based on each one's own faith.

Of course, one may point out that as in the world of religions we have different religions so also in the world of medicine we have different systems of medicine, say, Allopathic, Homeopathic, Ayurvedic, etc. However, the essential point to note is that each one of these medicinal systems is universal in spirit — not bound to any country or religion. Of course, they were developed in different countries. Even they might be found to be mixed up with some religious, metaphysical views — as, in fact, Ayurveda is mixed up with Hindu metaphysical views. But that is a historical accident. Hindu metaphysical views are not essential for Ayurveda as a science of medicine. The most unfortunate state of affairs is that all systems of medicine do not have equal opportunity for research and development. Even in India Ayurveda is neglected. Given equal opportunity for research and development, a particular system of medicine may emerge as the most beneficial system for humanity. Or, at least, they might be integrated into a system by which the humanity benefits the most. This would be possible only because the truths they claim are public. The efficacy of Ayurvedic medicine is not confined to the Hindus or Indians. It can cure any man anywhere in the world. However, this is not possible in case of religion despite its croaking in a high pitch that God is one, because in all religions God is relegated to the background and what give a specific identity to a particular religion are the peripheral things. Customs, traditions and practices become more important than God Himself. If these people do really believe that God is one, why cannot they give up the peripheral things and unite together to establish a universal religion? If they really believe in one universal God, why cannot they think of one universal religion?

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Even the so-called religious experience is possible on the part of a man if he entertains a conceptual network in which religious concepts are the core concepts and there is complete internalization of such concepts. He interprets everything as divine-willed and under specific circumstances his experience might be such that he would describe it as religious experience.

BRAHMAN, MAYA AND THE FACTS OF THE WORLD

Religion cannot afford to be rational. The moment it tries to be rational it totters. Perhaps that is the reason for the growth of religious fundamentalism today in the face of the growing rationalism among the people. Advaita Vedanta, one of the religio-philosophical systems in India, maintains that *Brahman* alone is real and the empirical world is *maya*, illusion or unreal. The world is real only for those who have not realized Brahman in their own experience and accept the validity of sense-experience, sense-perception, qualities and their relations. Similar distinctions might be found in other systems — Indian and foreign. The point to note is that Brahman is the metaphysical reality and the world we see can be said to be an empirical reality. Metaphysical reality, it is said, is the basis of empirical reality. But in the matter of proof, a metaphysical proposition is proved with the help of empirical propositions. And we never come across a proof in which an empirical proposition is being proved with the help of a metaphysical proposition.

Let us take an example: "Just as water falling from the sky goes to the sea, so the salutations offered to the various gods reach God alone." *(Âkasat patitam toyam yatha gaccati sagaram; sarva-deva-namaskarah Kesavam pratigaccati.)*

Here an attempt has been made to prove a metaphysical proposition with the help of an empirical proposition. If metaphysical reality is really the basis of empirical reality, then metaphysical propositions should help us prove empirical propositions. But we never come across that. What we come across are the cases in which metaphysical propositions are, like in the above case, being proved with the help of empirical propositions.

In the example given, the truth-value of the first part of the sentence can be determined by an appeal to experience. In fact, we find it to be true, because it is the nature of water to flow downward. But the truth-value of the second part of the sentence cannot be determined by an appeal to experience. It is a matter of belief. If one believes it to be true, it is true and if does not, then it is not. But an attempt has been made here to prove its truth with the help of an empirical proposition. And empirical truths cannot imply metaphysical truths. However, by stating these two together, the author thinks that the truth of first part would give credence to the second part. Actually the people in the past have been led in that way. But when we contemplate on the nature of empirical truths and the nature of metaphysical truths, we find that they are so completely different from one another that in the given example though the first part is true, its truth-value has no bearing on the truth-value of the second part. One has to prove or justify the second part in its own right. The very juxtaposition of these two together may raise a number of questions.

Is this analogical argument justified so far as the essential nature of water and that of *namaskaras* are concerned? The nature of water is to flow downward. What is the nature of *namaskaras*? Is it the nature of *namaskaras* to reach a particular god, Kesava, even if they are offered to other gods? What is the relation between gods (devas) and God (Kesava)? If one puts any other name in place of Kesava, will it be acceptable?

MAN — THE SINNER

Let us now rationally try to understand the essential nature of man in religion.

How is man placed in the scheme of religion? When we come across statements like: “Man is made in the image of God” or “Men are the children of immortality”, we feel very much elated and think that man has a very highly exalted place in the scheme of religion. But the views expressed in these statements do not seem to be central to the existence and continuance of religion. What do seem to be central and what do sustain religion are the concepts of sin and sinner. Religion considers man as essentially a sinner. Unless the concept of sin is hammered into the heads of human beings no religion can thrive. Some religions are there which openly declare that man is a sinner. Man himself declares: “O Father! I’m a sinner.” But in other religions it is not said so directly despite the existence of the concept of sin in their scheme of religion. In the Hindu religion, the soul or *atman* of a man is considered to be a part of the Great Soul or *paramatman* or God. Notwithstanding that it too considers man as essentially a sinner. *The Gita* says,

Yada-yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharat

Abhyuthanam adharmasya tada’tmanam srjamy aham.

(Whenever there is decay of *dharma* and rise of *adharma*, then I embody Myself, O Bharat.)

Paritranaya sadhunam vinasaya ca duskrtam

Dharma samsthapanarathaya sambhavami yuge yuge.

(For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of dharma I am born age after age.)

For the man who is oppressed, suppressed, exploited, etc., but feels that he is unable to set things right by himself — he feels helpless

in the situation he is in, these lines generate great hope in his heart. He believes that though he by himself cannot set things right, a day would come when God himself would come down to the world of man to punish his oppressors, suppressors, exploiters, etc. With this hope in his heart, he gets strength to bear the burdens of his life. These lines mean that human beings go on committing wicked actions and the quantity of such actions goes on increasing, but when the quantum of such action is about to cross the danger level, God would come down to the world of man to destroy wicked and establish order in society. However, that is not the end of it. It also means that men are essentially sinners and they would go on committing sin. When that again reaches the danger level, God would come again to destroy the wicked — to establish order. Again the commitment of sin, again the coming of God, again the destruction of the wicked and again the establishment of order. Repeat *ad infinitum.* God would come again and again to establish order, but he would never come to change the essential — sin committing — nature of man. God is interested in the destruction of the wicked, but he is not interested in the destruction of wickedness. Men must continue to be sinners, so that religions continue to thrive in the world. — For no sinner means no religion.

MAN — THE INDIVIDUAL

Man is a social animal. He lives in society. Religion is concerned with man, so it exists in society. Though religion sometimes seems to be concerned with the social good, it is primarily concerned with the individual. In a sense it preaches a kind of individualism.

Normally we observe that if a person acts in a particular manner it affects his relations in a definite way and if he acts in a different manner, his relations are affected differently. If the person acts in a noble manner, his relations enjoy prestige and honour, but if he acts in an

ignoble manner, then they are the victims of bad reputation and dishonour. In this sense we say that we have a share in the merits *(punya)* and demerits *(papa)* of the individual.

But this is not so in a strictly religious sense. As conceived in religion, the primary objective of man is to get liberated or to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven or to be united with God. Or something like that — it varies from religion to religion. But all religions agree that one can do so only on the basis of merits and demerits of one's own actions. These merits and demerits cannot be shared with others. No donating, no sharing, no borrowing is possible in the sphere of *papa* and *punya*. If one is set to liberate oneself, then he must be very particular about these to the extent that a socially committed man may shirk the social commitment and become solely committed to oneself.

Let us take the classic case of Sage Valmiki. As Dasyu Ratnakar he was committed to his parents, wife and children. He felt it was his responsibility to feed them by hook or by crook. He fed them by robbery. But when he was asked to ascertain from them whether they would have a share of the demerits earned by robbing, injuring or even killing people, they flatly refused to do so. Their answer shocked him and he was convinced to believe that the quantum of his demerit was so great that it needed immediate penance. So he left his family and went into the forest for penance. Thus Dasyu Ratnakar became Sage Valmiki.

So long as the concept of liberation was not there in his head, he was a family man. The moment the concept was put in his head, he shirked all responsibility towards his family, became self-centred and was concerned with the liberation of his own self.

Thus religion basically preaches individualism. Liberation is individual in all religions and at all times. It is never and nowhere collective or societal.

MAN MUST BE WEAK

"United we stand, divided we fall." However loudly we chant this mantra and however deeply we realize its truth that unity is strength and division is weakness, the objective of religion is to make man weak, for without making man weak God cannot appear as the strongest, omnipotent, and no religion can have any hold on mankind. We get an interesting account in *The Bible* (**Genesis**, Ch. 11) of how God broke the unity of mankind and divided them into innumerable groups and, thus, made them weak. It is said that there was only one language and only one speech throughout the whole of the earth. The people were one whole and the unity gave them strength. They thought of building a city and a tower to earn a name for themselves. They thought of building the tower so high that its top may reach unto Heaven. In the place of stone, they used brick and used slime for mortar and started building the city and the tower.

The Lord came down to see the city and the tower and then said that the people were one and they had one language and as they were united they would do whatever they imagined to do and nobody could restrain them from doing that. The children of man should not be allowed to do whatever they liked. So the Lord came down to confound their language so that they would not understand one another's speech. In this manner the Lord broke the unity and the strength of human beings and "scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all earth". As a result, they could not complete building the city and the tower. "Therefore is the name of it is called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth…"

Whether there is such a clear story in other religions or not, every religion tries to push it into the minds of the people that they are weak, feeble, etc. Unless this sense of weakness has deep roots in their minds, they cannot be submissive and no religion can have any sway over them.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE BASIS OF HUMAN VALUES?

We have said that God is nothing but the ignorance of man rationalized. If that is so, it implies a cultural system in which there is no God as the metaphysical ground of all cultural values. In that case one might raise a question: What would be the basis of our morality? Or who would reward or punish us for our activities? We raise such questions because of our cultural bondage in that way. We cannot imagine moral values without tracing their source to God or any other supernatural power.

But *the values of human life must be grounded in human life itself* and that would be more effective than if it is grounded in some supernatural power, because real morality should come from within us and it is not really moral if we act on the dictates of another person even if that person is God or if we act because of the fear of punishment by God. We should act in the way our own moral conscience urges us to act — not by any other dictate. Moreover, in most cases the supernatural agency is used as a tool in the exploitation of other human beings — in the explanation of socio-economic disparities, human sufferings, etc. The internalization of this God-oriented culture is so deep in us that it has blunted the sharp edges of reason and we are unable to see what is what. I know a man who strongly believes in the idea that whatever we do to others or to ourselves, or whatever is done to us by others, is done under the impact of the invisible Will of God and we are merely the means through whom God fulfils His Will. And combined with this idea are the ideas of rebirth and our past *karmas*. He is not prepared to give up such thoughts. His sons regularly misbehave with him. And when he complained to me about the misbehaviour of his sons, I told him that he need not feel sorry, for by such behaviour God's Will is being fulfilled. He is being punished for his past *karmas* and his sons are mere means

in the fulfillment of God's Will and are in no way responsible for their misbehaviour. He was mum but I could see the uneasiness in his eyes.

GENERATION OF VALUES IN A GODLESS WORLD — IN A SECULAR WORLD

We have said that *the values of human life must be grounded in human life itself.* Human values arise because of rationality of man, because of his memory, because of his apprehensiveness about the future. Man does not live in an ever-present world; he has roots in the past and spreads branches into the future. Man must create values in relation to human life as living through past, present and future. Man must found human values in this fact, and such human values would be more effective than the values founded on supernatural or metaphysical entities.

As a human being I find that I have a relation to myself, I have a relation to my family, I have relation to the human race and I have a relation to nature. In order to understand properly the nature of these relationships, I ask and each one of us should ask the following four questions:

(1) ***What is my relationship with myself ?***

(2) ***What is my relationship with my family ?***

(3) ***What is my relationship with the human race ?*** and

(4) ***What is my relationship with nature ?***

If a man answers these questions without any hypocrisy, then the answers he gives would generate a set of values for him, such that these relationships form the ground on which his value-system would be based. And his value-system would determine his actions. When he has such a holistic value-system, then his actions cannot be anything but

good, such that the establishment of a heaven on earth becomes a bright possibility.

How do I answer these questions? When I try to answer these questions I find that:

(1) When I strive to determine the nature of my relationship with myself, I find that there is a *three-fold* relationship. (a) I find life in me. The existence of this life is expressed in the throbbing, active organism, which I call my body. So I feel the responsibility to look after, and preserve this body as long as possible. (b) There is a mind in me, with the help of which I know about the world and myself. This faculty distinguishes the human race, to which I belong, from the lower animals and enables us to reach the higher stages of civilization and culture. So I feel the responsibility to develop this faculty of mine. (c) Millions of years of human existence and experience have put a sense in me by which I distinguish good from bad, and right from wrong. And I find that whatever is right or good generates life, generates happiness not only for me but also for others. So I feel the responsibility to develop this moral sense by being always on the right path, by being committed to what is good.

(2) I have a family. Here the word "family" is used in an extended sense to include my parents. My parents are responsible for the very life I have, they looked after me and imparted to me the rudimentary knowledge that was necessary in my childhood. So I have moral obligations towards my parents. As a result of biological process and to meet the needs of the preservation of the human race and to fulfill his emotional needs, a human being marries and begets children. I feel a responsibility towards them too. So I have an obligation to contribute my mite for their physical, moral and intellectual development.

(3) I am a product of the human race, of society. Man as a producer has changed the face of the world. Whenever I open my eyes I see things

that provide me with knowledge, comfort, etc. And I can see through these things the amount of labour and sacrifice involved in the production, invention, writing, etc. of these things. Simply because some people put in hard labour, sacrified a lot, that I am now in a comfortable position, and not in the position of a man, say, of 20,000 years ago daily struggling in the forest in search of food-stuffs in the forms of leaves, roots and fruits. All the comforts I enjoy now, I could not have provided myself all by myself, nor could my parents have helped me in this matter. Whatever I claim to know, I could not have known all by myself, nor could my parents have helped me to know all that. My parents could not have written for me all that I have read. So I feel a responsibility towards the human race and this responsibility is to be discharged by contributing my mite to its well being — material as well as intellectual.

(4) All that I need are provided by nature. — They are either the direct products of nature or we produce them out of the elements provided by nature. Nature sustains life. It sustains civilizations. In consideration of this bounteous aspect, man describes nature as the cradle of humanity, of civilizations. And we should see that this cradle is not destroyed. So I feel a responsibility towards nature. Our interest in nature should not be from the point of view of *our* interest such that we can exploit it to *our* maximum benefit. Our interest in nature should be from the interest of the human race and *our* utilization of nature should conform to the needs of the human race. We should not usurp everything for ourselves. We should not exhaust all the coal, all the petrol, and so on. We should have some consideration for the generations yet to come. This earth of ours must be a fit place for the coming generations. We must maintain an ecological balance. By maintaining an ecological balance man's relation to nature is balanced.

From these answers a set of values is generated for me and they rule over my relationship with my family, human race, nature and

myself. Better men could have provided better answers. In fact, all through the past men have been trying to answer some such questions and they have been providing us with values. But we seem to have been losing such values.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CREATORS OF VALUES

When a creator of values — a human being — is raised to the position of godhead we seem to lose human values. When we do so, we are unjust in two ways — firstly, we are unjust to the creators of values themselves, and secondly, to ourselves. We are unjust to them because by raising them to godheads we deny them their right to be called men. We are unjust to ourselves, because had we considered them to be simple human beings their ideals would have remained our ideals and we would have tried our level best to realize them in ourselves. But by calling them gods and godheads, we alienate ourselves from the values they have created. The values seem to be unrealizable in us, because the values were the values of godheads. And how can we, *mere human beings,* be able to realize in ourselves those values? We simply pray and immediately after the prayer we engage ourselves in all sorts of nefarious activities. However, unless such persons are raised to a higher platform and shown in a larger than life form and myths and miracles are created and propagated in their favour, no religion can be created and no religion can thrive. But in the process the values created by them are lost.

HOW WE LOSE HUMAN VALUES

I do not, on my part, wish to deny Jesus Christ, Gautama the Buddha, and other so-called godheads their right to be called men. As human beings they had their love and concern for man. Simply because they were concerned for men, they became creators of values. Mankind

raised them to the level of gods and prayed, but forgot the values they created. Let us take the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths *(catvari arya satyani)*: (a) Life in the world is full of suffering *(duhkha)*, (b) There is a cause of suffering *(duhkha-samudaya)*, (c) It is possible to stop suffering *(dukha-nirodha)*, and (d) There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering *(duhkha-nirodha-marga)*. People prayed and prayed, but forgot the causal explanation the Buddha was offering about suffering. Had they not raised Gautama to the level of godhead, but considered him a human being — as *one of their own* — and understood the causal format the Buddha put forward to solve the problems of life, then they would have applied it to solve the various problems of life. They would have perceived that there is poverty; that there is a cause of this poverty; that if this cause is removed, poverty would be removed; and then they would have looked for the ways to do it. Similarly, they could have enquired about unemployment, corruption, etc. But instead of doing that, most of the people depended on fate, *karma*, rebirth, etc. Thus, people eulogized the Four Noble Truths, but failed to apply them in solving the problems that man and society were facing. People prayed to the Buddha, but forgot his teaching. Similar is the case with other godheads.

PURUSOTTAMA RAMA

Similar is also our attitude towards Rama and Rama's values. Gautama the Buddha and Jesus Christ were historical personalities. But there is a controversy about the historicity of Rama. On the one hand, Rama is claimed to be a historical personality, though an *avatar* of God. That is why there is so much controversy about the birthplace of Rama. On the other hand, Rama is claimed to be a fictional character in the great epic *Ramayana* — the hero of the great epic. However, let us not enter into this controversy. But we note that in many a case, books have influenced and moulded the lives of people. Nehru was influenced by

Travelyan's *Garibaldi*, and Chernishevsky's *What is to be done?* moulded Lenin's life to a great extent. And if we take this factor into account we find that *the Ramayana* has influenced and moulded the lives of many people of India — if not with regard to values, at least in prayer.

The hero of *the Ramayana* is Rama. And he is said to be the *purusottama*. Those who believe that Rama was an *avatar* of God may understand the word purusottama in the sense of God. But those who believe that Rama was only a character (though a hero) among other characters portrayed in *The Ramayana* may understand *purusottama* as the best of the human personalities characterized in the epic. As God or an *avatar* of God he would be the best — the perfect — by definition. But what interests us is the worldly sense: why is he claimed to be the best among men? People are there who would evaluate certain actions of Rama to be immoral: e.g., the killing of Bali from behind the trees. Notwithstanding that he can be considered as an embodiment of certain values. He loved his parents to such an extent that in order to enable his father to keep his promise he went to the forest foregoing his claim to the crown. Consider his love for his brothers, his wife and the subjects. He was dutiful and truthful. But the greatest value upheld in the epic is shown in the episode of driving away of Sita to live in the forest. When I say so, the people who are fighting for women's liberation may raise a hue and cry in protest. I would tell them to have a little patience for a while. Had Rama doubted a whit Sita's chastity, he would not have brought her from Lanka to Ayodhya. Still on the basis of a mere remark by a washerwoman, he drove her out of the royal palace to live in the forest. — That too at a time when she was in the family way. On the surface of it — a very inhuman act. But let us delve a little into it. The thought of an ideal king was there in the mind of Rama. The ideal king must be of such character that nobody would have an opportunity to raise an accusing finger at him. With this standard in his mind, he was face to face with a contradiction between his private interest and his

public interest. His private interest was in his beloved Sita, in his family life. His public interest was a blemish-free character as a king against whom nobody would have an opportunity to raise an accusing finger. Even though he drove Sita away, he continued to love her. Otherwise he would have married another princess. There was nothing against such a step. His father had three queens and many more behind the screen. There would not have been any dearth of princesses to become queens of Ayodhya. Rama did not do that. Even at the time of *Aswamedha Yajna*, when there was the demand for the queen as per the rules of *Yajna*, Rama got an idol of Sita made of gold to fulfill the requirement. Thus, we find that by sacrificing his family life, he solved the contradiction between his private interest and his public interest. We come across instances in which we see kings giving up their crowns for the sake of women, but Rama sacrificed his love for a woman to bear the burden of a crown on his head, because he was very much conscious of his duty, his *dharma*, as a king. Thus he opted to uphold the public interest that the image of the ruler must be clean. This is a value that we badly need at present when we find so many corruption and other charges levelled against our rulers and politicians — not to speak of the other sections of the people. Rama shows the way in which we should solve contradictions involving our private interests and public interests.

But nobody seems to talk about this great value shown in the life of Rama, though some people are ready to cut the throats of other people for the birthplace of Rama. We have been praying to Rama, but we have become blind to the values that were shown in his very life.

RAMARAJYA

Of course, some people raise slogans for the establishment of *Ramarajya*, but they do so for political reasons — to get political mileage on the road to power. *Ramarajya* continues to be considered by the

Indian people as a value to be realized for the betterment of Indian society. They cherish this value. This cherished value is quite sentimental and the politicians exploit this sentiment. But the question is: Can this value be realized at this fag end of the twentieth century or even during the twenty-first century or even thereafter. The slogan-raisers do not raise such a question. They do not examine whether it is possible or not. They merely exploit the aspirations and sentiments of the people — the weakness of the people. Let us examine it briefly. *Ramarajya* belongs to an age, which, in modern terminology, can be said to be the feudal age, whereas we live in the capitalist era. During the feudal age the primary means of production was land. During those days whoever possessed more land enjoyed more power and prestige in the society, and in the hierarchy he was either a peasant or a landlord or a zamindar or a king or an emperor. But in this age of capitalism, industry that requires capital plays the key role and whoever possesses more capital, more industries, enjoys more power and prestige. Industry has replaced land as the key economic factor — as the centre of economic activity. Similarly, the capitalist has pushed the feudal lord into the pages of history.

During the feudal period kings and emperors ruled over kingdoms and empires. Whatever they dictated were the laws of the land. They ruled over people. Now-a-days people opt for what are called democracies in which the people, it is said, rule themselves. In a democracy, not even the Prime Minister's words can be taken to be the law of the land. There are hundreds of people in Parliament and assemblies to decide what would be the laws of the land.

Where can one get a Rama now? Even if that were possible, if the people around him in a Parliament or an Assembly or a government are not honest, then it would not take much time to turn him into a corrupt and dishonest man. The people of India had great faith in late Rajiv Gandhi. He was rated to be so honest that the people called him Mr.

Clean. But what happened? The system works in such a manner that even after his death the Bofors guns continue to boom.

During the feudal period people mostly lived in joint families. People belonging to many generations lived under one roof and ate in one kitchen. They all obeyed the head of the family. If someone in the family was disabled or handicapped, nobody thought of him to be a burden on the family. But in this age of capitalism, the joint families have disappeared and in their place we have now individualistic — atomic — families. The days of supporting other members of the family have disappeared into history. The family bonds have eroded to a great extent. Even in these individualistic — atomic — families, parents and children do not often pull together well. We do not lack instances in which a son is seen running after his father to kill him or a father running after his son to do the same. Brothers are after one another. So is the case with the other relations in the family. — All this because of the greed for wealth and property. Would not this growth of rabid individualism stand in the way of the establishment of the so-called *Ramarajya*?

Caste-system was an inherent character of the Indian society in the feudal age. The feudal society in India could not, perhaps, be run without dividing the society into different castes. Caste-system was prevalent in Rama's reign. He was an ardent defender of the caste-system. He even punished people for violating the rules laid down for different castes to function in the society. But in this age of capitalism, the caste-system has become irrelevant. Rather, the caste-system is considered a hindrance for the free growth of capitalism. Though the people still stick to their castes, it is just a vestige of the feudal era. It is gradually disappearing. Under the impact of the capitalist mode of production, the caste-system is gradually disappearing from Indian society. Now the question is: Should we turn the wheel of progress in the reverse direction to have *Ramarajya* with its rigid caste-system?

Someone may say that by *Ramarajya* one does not mean a feudal political system, a king, a feudal economy, a feudal social system, a caste-ridden society, etc., but a society in which a number of values prevail in the society and the values are shown in the very way of life the people lead. Then another question may be raised: What are those values, which are supposed to be realized only in a *Ramarajya* and not in any other political system and why is it absolutely impossible to realize those values in other political systems?

MIRACLES

No religion can thrive without miracles and myths. Christianity too attributed miracles to Jesus Christ. One such miracle is the miracle of feeding the multitudes. Thousands of people had come to see Jesus Christ. Out of compassion he wanted to feed them. But he had with him only seven loaves of bread and a few small fishes. He fed them all out of this little amount of foodstuff. Not only that, "they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets". Leo Tolstoy presents a different picture of this miracle. Once he was vexed with the question: What is the meaning of life? In order to get an answer, he read a lot of books including *The Bible* in various languages. But after reading *The Bible* in Greek a new light dawned on him. Then he wrote *Four Gospels, What I Believe?, Twenty-three Tales,* etc. in the true spirit of Christianity. About the miracle he says that thousands of people had come to Jesus Christ to see and hear him. Some people had come with their own food and some poor people had come without it. But Jesus Christ passed unto them a message to feed others. So, in a sense, everyone tried to feed every other person. Thus, everybody was satisfied and seven baskets of foodstuff were in balance. The lesson that mankind did not learn is: So long as we say "mine" and "for me", everything would be in shortage: but if, on the other hand, we say "ours" and "for us", there will be abundance of everything. By transforming the noble incident into a

miracle, we lost a great message and a great value. If we had inherited this social and collective attitude from Jesus Christ the world would have been a different world today.

UPHOLDING AN OBSOLETE VALUE

Let us take the case of Muslim Personal Law permitting them to have maximum four wives. I do not know how or under what circumstances, this could get into their personal law. I beg apology for my ignorance. But when I look for a possible reason, I think of two possibilities. (a) During those days there might have been powerful and rich people marrying too many women, even hundreds. In that case there might have been many men without wives and this would have been causing a social problem needing a solution. Rich and powerful men must not be offended while bringing about some social change. Even now people say so. And during the Middle Ages such a thing would be unimaginable. So allowing men to marry maximum four women might be a compromise formula to pacify the rich and powerful. Or (b) too many small principalities might have been there always at loggerheads and war, resulting in the death of a substantial chunk of male population. This would have many women as widows without support but not without emotional problems. This might have caused a social problem. And "four" might have been the lucky number that could have solved the problem. But if someone says today that as per the Muslim Personal Law he has a right to marry four women and nobody, no government, has any right to change the Personal Law of Muslims, then he is sticking irrationally to an obsolete value, and, thereby, alienating himself from the values that are the need of the hour.

Thus, having grounded the moral values of human life in human life itself, we can say: *"We have loved God enough, let us now turn our eyes*

towards the children of God." — We have prayed perfection enough. ***Let us now perfect ourselves.***

UNIVERSAL CULTURE AND SCIENCE

"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah" is a battle cry against universalism in culture. We are urged upon to defend and revere our particular culture — to maintain our cultural individuality. If a culture is a set of ideas, it can be analyzed into a sub-set of core ideas and a subset of peripheral ideas. All the adjustment, synthesis, assimilation, it is said, may be made in the peripheral sphere of ideas, but not in the centre. But can we really do that without bringing in some kind of disharmony and inconsistency into the system of culture, for what is there in the periphery may be logically related to what is there in the centre? Strictly speaking if *our framework* is the criterion of assimilation then no assimilation is possible. There is no point in saying that a cultural value V1 of an alien culture is equivalent to value V2 of our culture and so we assimilate it into our culture, for in that case either V1 or V2 as a separate entity will be a redundant element in our culture. In fact, they are just one value. What is needed is the assimilation of new cultural values, but if such values go against the framework they will not be assimilated. This is because our criterion of assimilation is the *framework*, not the *nobility of ideas*, i.e., to say the same thing in other words, our march is towards particularism, not towards universalism. Particular cultures have to transcend this particularism; the people upholding such cultures must transcend the particular basic attitude they have towards the world and man. The cultures and people, by themselves, are helpless and they cannot transcend the narrow particularism. Science can help them in this matter. As science is universal, a culture that is based on science will be universal, and science as an inbuilt mechanism can safeguard the culture from the dangers of dogmatism and narrow particularism. Thus, science can help us to bring

about this attitudinal change. The effect would be universal fraternity. Humanity can be saved from the irrational destruction of human lives and property in the name of *our culture*.

We must note here that this universal culture is not another science consisting of scientific truths, but it is a system of science-oriented values. Such a culture can enable us to assimilate what is nobler in the so-called alien culture, for here nobility of a value is the criterion of assimilation, not mere framework. And here again particular cultures would be pseudo-particulars, for, in essence, they would be universal. Being science-oriented, they would become truth-based and being truth-based, they become living cultures. Let us struggle for such cultures for a better world. In our struggle we shall lose nothing but our superstitions, narrow-mindedness and dogmatism. Our gains are tremendous. — We march into a glorious future.

SCIENCE AND VALUES

Some people may consider my views about science and science-based values as too optimistic and even go so far as to say that my optimism is shortsighted and dogmatic, and the result of: (1) a deliberate refusal to look at the scars on the face of science, and (2) a failure to see the truth that values cannot be derived from the facts of science.

First, my whole contention is that there are no scars on the face of science. Rather, the face of science is fair and beautiful, for I make a distinction between science as a knowing process and consisting of the results obtained through this process, on the one hand, and the application of scientific knowledge, on the other. It is the application of scientific knowledge that may be good or bad — may be beneficial or harmful to humanity. Science by itself is not harmful. There are no scars, so how can I see the scars, which are not there?

Second, by saying "science-oriented values", I do not mean to say that the values can be *deduced* from the truths of science. Though it is not possible to have a strict logical derivation of the *ideal* from the *actual* — the *Ought* from the *Is*, still it can be said that the ideal and the actual are related in the sense that a concrete social reality may prompt a particular set of moral ideals and a changed social reality may prompt a different one. Though there is no strict logical implication between the *Ought* and the *Is*, still in the background of the *Is* the *Ought* takes a definite form. Values are given to the facts of the world — not that they follow from them. Since we have said that the values of human life must be grounded in human life itself and not in some supernatural power and as we find that science is inextricably a part of human life, our value-system must be developed by our scientific attitude such that the value-system would not be inconsistent with our scientific knowledge. — Our value-system and our science would be at peace with each other. It might seem difficult to develop such a value-system, but an attempt should be made and the sooner the better. Morality as a value can be secular, for it is not possible for a man to be religious without being moral, but it is always possible for a man to be moral without being religious. *A good man does not become bad, only because he does not believe in a God.*

Now so far as the harmful applications of scientific knowledge is concerned, it is my belief that our humanistic value-system in a living culture should and would be in a position to control the applications of scientific knowledge for the benefit of man, because our conception of a living culture is a conception of a universal culture, not the conception of a particular culture as opposed to other cultures. Our conception of a living culture is a conception of a universal culture, which is based on truth, not the conception of a particular culture based on dogmas and as opposed to other particular cultures. This universal culture would stand in the way of harmful applications of scientific knowledge, which

is associated, in one form or the other, with exploitation, for a living culture would be opposed to any form of exploitation.

Whatever I have said above should not be understood to mean that I am urging upon the people to give up what we have as our cultural heritage. What I urge upon the people is *to winnow our heritage to gather the grains for a living culture.*

PURUSOTTAMA OR OVERMAN

We have to winnow our heritage to separate the grains from the chaff. To do that, we have to evaluate all the values in our heritage. To have a living culture we can grant it as a principle that *every generation has to reevaluate all the values of the past in the light of growing knowledge in order to find their relevance to the present.* A living culture aims at better men, better societies and a better world. Nietzsche called a better man — Übermann (overman), but we too have a suitable word in our tradition. It is *purusottama*. But the word "purusottama" should not be understood the way it is normally understood at present. — As another name for God. For in a living culture we may deny God, but we have to honour the godliness in man — the culture-generating and life-giving qualities in men. If we look for an example of overman or purusottama, we can cite, I think, the case of Jesus Christ or Gautama the Buddha. They *showed* in the very way of life they lived what human perfection could be *in those days*. Only in the religions of Christianity and Buddhism they are lost.

Of course, someone may question me at this point: "How do you cite Jesus Christ and Gautama the Buddha as examples of overman? — They differ from one another. Jesus Christ believed in God whereas Nietzsche's overman does not believe in God. Though Gautama the Buddha did not believe in God, he believed in *karma* and *rebirth* whereas Nietzsche's overman does not believe in such concepts. Do you

equate *overman* with *purusottama*?" In order to answer these questions I must first answer the question: How do I understand the concept of overman? And the answer to this question would also answer the former ones.

Overman is a creator and as a creator he does not conform, does not surrender, to things of the past — he does not keep his eyes fixed on his fatherland. Being a creator he is an annihilator too — an annihilator of old values, old nobilities, etc. and by doing so he looks towards his children's land. He does not consider himself to be *human and all-too-human* and credit all that is best, noble, worth and strong to some *otherworldly being*, God. He does not, thus, worship perfection, but tries to perfect himself — in *this* life and here on *this* earth. He is conceived to be a *thisworldly* reality. However, he is not a blue-print-ideal. Rather, he is a *becoming*. He is the product of the conscious will to human perfection as an annihilator of old values and a creator of new ones. An overman destroys old values and creates new ones, but he does not do so being guided by whim or caprice. He is always guided by what he claims to know. — That sets the boundary for his belief system, his problems and the explanations he accepts as the solutions to the problems.

God formed a necessary part of Jesus Christ's knowledge, but for Gautama the Buddha God was not necessary though he needed *karma* and *rebirth* to explain many facts of human life. *Karma* and *rebirth* were not parts of Christ's knowledge, for he believed in only one life. The overman is essentially a man and being a human being he takes human knowledge into account. A man is happy. Why so? Christ would answer: "By the grace of God!" The Buddha would say: "As a result of *karma*." But a Soviet overman would have said nothing of God or *karma* or *rebirth*. He would have referred to the changed socio-economic conditions in explanation of the happiness of man. (This answer becomes all the more significant because a changed socio-economic

condition made the majority of the erstwhile Soviet people the victims of poverty and unhappiness.)

Every overman would thus have roots in his present and past and his overmanship lies in creating new values in the light of growing knowledge. An overman does not aim at absolute perfection, for absolute perfection is an absolute nonsense. "Absolute perfection" is an empty concept and it can have relation only with other empty concepts like "God", "soul", etc. What an overman aims at is human perfection and human perfection is always a *becoming*. During their times Jesus Christ and Gautama the Buddha, we may say, were overman — they were creators of values.

Overmanship is a possibility not only for man like Jesus Christ and Gautama the Buddha, but also for every human being provided he or she becomes a creator of values — leading humanity a step further towards human perfection. The prevalence of new values makes a culture a living culture. Human perfection and living culture demand that the overmen of succeeding generations are to surpass and triumph over the overmen of the past generations. In every generation an overman is an evaluator of all values and through reevaluation of all values, he creates new values.

WHO IS DENIED OF OVERMANSHIP?

It is possible for every man to become an overman, but the possibility is denied to those, who can be said to be men of conviction, men of faith, believers, dogmatists, fanatics, etc. For, they are inside their own prisons and the prison walls are their own convictions. They are not impartial. They have no standard to distinguish truth from untruth. They are not independent. They do not belong to themselves. They are a means. They must be used up. And in fact, they are being

used up. But our overman is just the opposite of these. And he is necessarily a skeptic. Being skeptical, he becomes creative.

AN OVERMAN IS A SKEPTIC

One can be a skeptic only if one is rational. An overman is a human being and as such he is rational. Let us consider:

(a) Human beings are rational.

(b) Human beings must be rational.

Here (a) means human beings have the potentiality to think, argue, evaluate, etc. and (b) means human beings must use these potentialities. (And the activity takes place in relation to some explicit or implicit principles.) In this sense rationality is an activity of function of the human mind. If this function can be said to be a value at all, it is not on par with other values because other values are evaluated with the help of this function of the mind. Only when this function is stopped we say of things as sacred or profane, for once we say of things as *sacred* or *profane*, no amount of argument would force us to change our opinion. — We shall be blind to all arguments. But we have to distinguish truth and falsity from sacred and profane. Truth and falsity are results of rational activity; something becomes *sacred* or *profane* only when the rational activity stops. (Similarly, we have to distinguish truth-based values from the values created by imagination and fancy.) So the words “sacred” and “profane” are alien to the scientific spirit. A living culture is not something placed on an idealized pedestal, but it is a culture to be built up anew by every upcoming, new generation. Similarly, an overman is not something like a Platonic Idea in some Ideal World and we are to be somewhat imperfect copies of it. An overman is a becoming and the overmen of the present generation are better than the overmen of the preceding generations, for the overmen of the present generation capitalizes on the knowledge and experience of the

overmen of the past generations. They stand on the shoulders of the preceding generations.

OVERMAN AND HIS MISTAKES

It may be argued here that sometimes we act in a particular manner before our rationality comprehends the very situation we are in and subsequently the rationality sees the action as hasty, superstitious, etc. Can a living culture or an overman be free from such hasty actions? The possibility of such action is there in any culture — living or not. Any man — overman or not — under a particular set of conditions may act in this manner. An overman, after all, is a man! For example, in dim light a man comes across something three or four feet long and about one inch in diameter lying across the path. He, for certain, would not consider it to be a piece of rope and walk on or over it. Nor even one can go coolly near it to see whether it is a snake or a piece of rope. His life-preserving instinct would dictate him to consider it a snake first and keep himself away at a safe distance and then to examine whether it is a snake or a piece of rope. He might err. Even if he were an overman, he cannot be free from such error. But if error is there then the possibility of its rectification is also there. An overman, being rational, can see his mistakes earlier than a person who is not so rational. So the possibility of an early rectification is also there.

I have just given a few examples of overman, but whoever has taken mankind, its culture and civilization a step further by creating values, can be said to be an overman. Again, here one may ask: Different kinds of values are there, what kind of value is involved here? Which kind of value does not matter, but it is sufficient if it is culture-generating, happiness-generating for mankind at large. Both Christ and the Buddha advocated systems of values, which generated culture and happiness for the people. It may be noted here that being creators of

values, they were also destroyers of values. They reacted with their past. In spite of the differences in their belief systems they were overmen. In this manner, every great man has reacted with his past, reevaluated all the values of his past, created new values and in the process destroyed some of the old values, even gave new meanings to old words (— as did Vivekananda to the word "sanyasa"). Thus, they were all creators of values — they were overman.

The word "overman" is an English translation for the German word "Übermann" which Nietzsche used. When I look for a word (as mentioned earlier) in our tradition, the word "purusottama" naturally comes to my mind. When I compare "overman" with "purusottama" to stand for what I have said above, I find the word "purusottama" to be more appropriate. My only fear is that if it is understood in its traditional meaning, i.e., God, then confusion and misunderstanding would emerge. In that case it would be better to confine ourselves to the word "overman". Still, if the word "purusottama" is judiciously used in its new meaning given above, then it is the most appropriate word, for it has an ennobling connotation, which the word "overman" does not seem to have for us. Etymologically too the word "purusottama" has an edge over the word "overman" for the latter means a person over or above men whereas the former means the best of men *(uttama purusa)*. Also, we have the word "mahapurusa" (great man) to do the job. Which word we choose can be said to be just a linguistic preference, but what is important is the meaning given to it.

OUTDATED VALUES WITHIN A CULTURE

We have said that we have to winnow our heritage to gather the grains for a living culture. We have to separate the grains from what we consider now to be the chaff. Nietzsche said, "Not only the wisdoms of centuries — also their madness breaketh out on us. Dangerous is it to

be an heir.” The wisdom of our ancestors and also their so-called madness we inherit in the form of values. I have said “their so-called madness” because when they upheld a particular value, there might be a historical or otherwise need for it; but the upholding of that particular value may appear to us today to be a kind of madness on the part of our ancestors, because that value appears to us irrelevant to meet our present needs. Not that our ancestors were mad in upholding such values, but we must be mad in upholding them which are irrelevant to meet the present needs. If they were really mad in upholding such values, we shall be twice mad by upholding them now. Anyway, by upholding our cultural heritage *in toto*, we shall have a streak of madness in us. Therefore, we have said that *every generation has to reevaluate all the values of the past in the light of the growing knowledge in order to find their relevance to the present.* We have to separate the grain from the chaff in this manner to build up a living culture.

CONDTENDING VALUES IN TWO CULTURES

Unless blinded by dogmatism and vested interest, living cultures should step-by-step lead to a universal culture for living cultures have the inherent tendency to become a universal culture. Suppose two culture groups CGA and CGB are there. Both have their respective cultural value systems. Among other values, the value V1 gives CGA a specific cultural identity and, similarly, among other values, the value V2 gives CGB another specific cultural identity. To maintain their specific cultural identities, the people of the two groups are at loggerheads and are ready to mow down each other’s heads. That is what we do, in fact, find in today’s world. But suppose there is another value V3 which, if they accept it as a value, will enable them to live in peace and brotherhood. However, in order to accept it they would have to give up the values V1 and V2. People grudge doing so. But in the interest of

peace, better human understanding and better human relationship, the contending groups should become creators and evaluators and by evaluating they should give up the values V1 and V2 which, as the evaluation would show, have outlived as values.

"ANO BHADRAH KRATAVO YANTU VISVATAH" IS THE PATH

We have two frameworks: (a) *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"* and (b) *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah"*. We have seen that in the framework of *"Svadharme nidhanam sreyah paradharmo bhayavahah"* the criterion of assimilation is the framework itself; whatever value can be assimilated without any tension or contradiction in the framework can be assimilated, but if it causes any tension or contradiction then it has to be rejected. But if we look into the past we would find that much of the progress was retarded simply because something progressive caused tension in the system or contradicted with something which was accepted as true. Not only that, thousands of human beings were tortured and hundreds were burnt at stake during those days for advocating such progressive thoughts, theories, etc. But in the framework of *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"* the criterion of selection is the nobility of the ideas. Among the values, there might be tension, there might be contradiction, but we simply compare two values to determine which is nobler. By accepting the nobler one, we ease the tension, we resolve the contradiction, and by opting for the nobler values we are always on the path of progress. What is required is an attitudinal change. — An attitudinal change in favour of *"Ano bhadrah kratavo yantu visvatah"*. With such an attitude we march towards a better world where we would have universal culture, universal brotherhood and universal peace.

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